

THE COUNTER FORCE



Welcome to

2025



2025 TOP TENS • REVIEWS • COLUMNS
INTERVIEW: K-TOWN HARDCORE FEST

STREAM+DOWNLOAD

**70+ NEW
DEMOS**

2025.DEMO-FEST.ORG

A BENEFIT FOR
**SOLIDARITY
ACROSS
BORDERS**

DEMO FEST

2025



What is this? *The Counterforce* is an initiative to push back against the corporate capture of hardcore punk. Social media apps and streaming platforms dominate how we interact online, including how we share and distribute our music and ideas. The corporations that run these platforms extract massive profits from us, which they use to fund and facilitate exploitation, war, and genocide. Meanwhile, our independent and underground alternatives have eroded.

The goal of *The Counterforce* is to strengthen and grow the hardcore punk underground that still exists outside of this corporate capture. Rather than funnel punk into profit-driven walled gardens, we want to foment and encourage a culture that is autonomous and independent. This is not just a nostalgic, backward-facing project—we want to explore new alternatives for spreading hardcore punk online and offline.

You are reading issue #9 of the print version of *The Counterforce*.

Find the files to print and distribute this zine (and others like it) yourself online at <https://the-counterforce.org>

There, you will also find the other arms of *The Counterforce*:

A Web Zine

This site publishes reviews, letters, scene reports, profiles/interviews, rants, and how-to guides, all with an emphasis on projects that try to exist outside of corporate platforms.

In part, we hope this will encourage human-driven curation, recommendation, and discovery. Find out about new bands that aren't on the streaming sites. Submit a review of your own band. Compile a scene report or show review and send it in. We also publish articles and DIY how-to guides to help empower other punks to build and participate in a scene that's less centered around evil apps.

All this is published online, but also compiled into regular print zine editions to bring paper back to the punk show (like the version you are reading now).

A directory of similarly aligned projects

The Internet is breaking down. Websites outside of a handful of apps have slowly disappeared, and the ones that are still out there are harder and harder to find.

The Counterforce provides a directory of these websites: blogs, archives, distros, zines, radio shows and podcasts... anywhere hardcore punk can be found online (and maybe offline too!).

A place to experiment with and learn about alternatives

It's easy to shit on the corporate social media and streaming platforms, but what other options are there? There are alternatives and we try them out—public online show calendars, open-source social media, self-hosted music sharing—and encourage other punks to join us.



THE COUNTERFORCE IS A DISTRIBUTED AND COMMUNITY PROJECT

Find everything online at: the-counterforce.org

CONTACT

E-mail: the-counterforce@riseup.net

Mastodon: @the_counterforce@kolektiva.social

Text/voicemail: 518-50-FORCE (518-503-6723)

Signal: counterforce.99 or 518-503-6723

Mail:

The Counterforce
PO box 25072
Montreal RPO Villeneuve
4547 Boul Saint-Laurent
Montreal, QC
H2T 1R0
CANADA

if sending us something other than a letter (like a record/tape for review) from outside Canada you must indicate it has a declared value under \$20. Otherwise, Canada will apply duties and taxes which we cannot afford to pay!

PRINT THIS ZINE

This zine is available on our website as a PDF you can print out and distribute yourself.

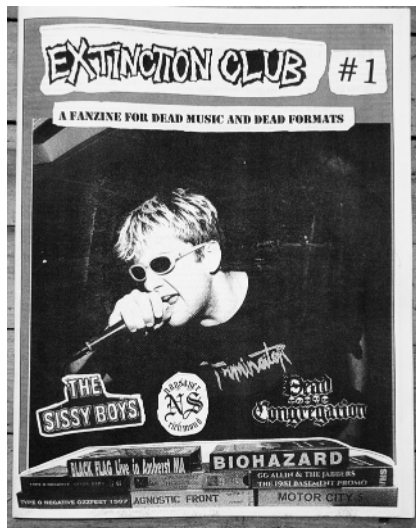
ZINE REVIEWS

EXTINCTION CLUB #1

The subtitle reads “a fanzine for dead music and dead formats”, as Will shares his passion for both in this classic cut & paste zine. You'll find an interview with Dom from NAYSAYER and TRAIL OF LIES, an old interview Will did with DEAD CONGREGATION; a super short Q+A with THE SISSY BOYS and a CRIPPLED YOUTH reprint. There's also some record and show reviews, as well as a bunch of articles about Death Metal, Hardcore that's not on streaming and obscure VHS stuff. I love this kind of zines that feels super honest and are just a reflection of the author's interests

E-mail for the zine:
extinctionclub905@gmail.com

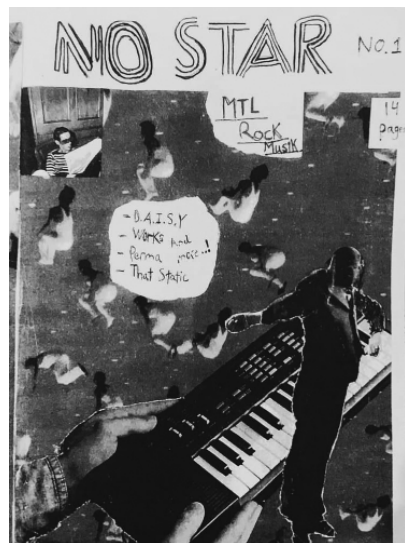
—Nab



No Star no. 1

Short zine from Montreal with a lot of collages. It showcases art pieces as well as music write-ups about local bands DEATH AS IT SHOOK YOU (D.A.I.S.Y), WORKS, PERMA, THAT STATIC, and also an article on MERZBOW and Free Jazz. It's cool and I love seeing hyper-specific interest zones dedicated to a local scene, I just wished there was more to sink your teeth into, like maybe a full interview of the bands would have been cool. I love the hand made cut and paste layout!

—Nab



A digital zine distro

Major punk fanzines of the past fell victim to the rising costs of printing and shipping. We publish printable PDFs of our zines online for anyone to print and distribute themselves, and encourage other zinesters to submit their own.

What if instead of shipping zines around the world, any punk anywhere could log on, download some PDFs and scam some copies to have a fully stocked, PWYC zine distro at the next show? **Print-It-Yourself!**

A hard line against contributing to further corporate capture of our subculture:

- No links to Instagram, Spotify, Linktree, Discord, or other corporate platforms.
- No coverage of releases that are on major labels, or only available digitally on corporate streaming platforms.
- Always independent and not-for-profit.

For expanding the hardcore punk mutual aid autonomous zone.

For facilitating human curation and recommendation.

For hardcore punk with context and politics.

Against celebrity, ladder climbers, clout chasers and influencers.

Against the algorithmic flattening of our subculture.

Against the capitalist death machine and the corporate capture of hardcore punk.

Contributors to this issue: *Bad Sasha, Bee, Felix L.G., Greg the Builder, Hampton/Earth Girl Tapes, Hamza Yahyaoui, Marginal, Martin Force, Nab, P-Lou, Ralph Rivera, Slim, Taylor Joy & VanisleJay. Cover by Bad Sasha. Layout by Taylor Joy.*

Contact

E-mail: the-counterforce@riseup.net

Mastodon: @The_Counterforce@kolektiva.social

Text/voicemail: 518-50-FORCE (518-503-6723)

Signal: counterforce.99 or 518-503-6723

Mail:

The Counterforce
PO box 25072
Montreal RPO Villeneuve
4547 Boul Saint-Laurent
Montreal, QC
H2T 1R0
CANADA

*If sending us something other than a letter (like a record/tape for review) from outside Canada you must indicate it has a declared value under \$20. Otherwise, Canada will apply duties and taxes which we cannot afford to pay!

This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

THE COUNTERFORCE'S TOP TENS OF 2025

2025 in a nutshell, from contributors to The Counterforce.

Bad Sasha's 2025 Top Ten Wholesome Moments at Shows

- Burning the Israeli flag during FLOWER on NYE in the Freedom Tunnel
- Every time STREET GLOVES + Taylor covered Search for the Sun
- Steve Lake thanking Nay (HYSTERIC POLEMIX) for liking his "weird gay techno" album
- Zip line and trampoline breaks between bands at Izero Fest in Poland
- The floor breaking at 1 in 12 club while TOTAL NADA played and saving a piece (pictured, right)
- Everything about SCUMPUTER and ALIENATOR at Bar Patriotes
- Gabba (CHAOS UK) saying "I feel a little bit responsible" while watching FUCKIN' LOVERS
- Post show karaoke at East River Studios with people crowd surfing to "Country Roads"
- Literally crying while ZOUNDS played "Did He Jump" but never receiving an answer... was he pushed?
- Varning extracurriculars (Laser tag, Dance Party)



Honorable mentions:

- MOB 47 playing "Discard" and bopping heads with Claire during "Death From Above" (Winter 2024)
- Losing my glasses by crowdsurfing to the front of the room during GOLPE at K-Town Hardcore Fest (worth it)
- Search for the Sun celebration cake being presented (but not eaten RIP)



NO VICTIM – NO VICTIM CS

Q: Do you still believe in hardcore?

A: How could you not?

—Ralph Rivera



OCIOSA – S/T 7"

I recently picked up this 7" at the EXTRAÑA HUMANA and EULOGY double release show. I don't remember hearing or seeing this band before but I've clearly

been missing out. This is heavy d-beat that checks all the important boxes. Solid vocals, heavy guitars with just the right amount of soloing, a couple mid tempo parts to keep things interesting, plus it was all DIY recorded in a warehouse. There's also couple really good samples on here which is always a bonus for me.

—Vanislejay



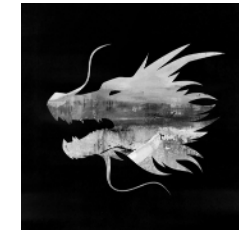
RIGOROUS INSTITUTION – Tormentor

This record feels like listening to AMEBIX in an amphitheater. Everything is there, you can hear everything in the

mix, it's tight, but the sound is somehow both stark and a crushing wall. It's dark as hell, plus bird samples will get a high rating from me every time.

Listen to this loud on a dark winter night while the wind blows.

—Vanislejay



SUZZALO – The Quiet Year LP

This is Rocky Votolato's latest project with members of his 90's emo band WAXWING.

Besides being the main character in the Edge of Quarrel movie, he's most known for his solo career and is probably one of my favourite singer/songwriter. This is the first new music we get from him in a while; actually since his kid died tragically in a car accident a couple years ago. Needless to say this is a heavy record; but it's also beautiful, cathartic, heart-wrenching, full of love and very inspiring. Musically we get a wide array of exceptionally dynamic alt-rock/post-hardcore, very much akin to what WAXWING were known for, but also taking cues from bands like RYE COALITION, SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE or FUGAZI. I like that it has its abrasive moments, but the stellar musicianship shines through the whole record. Rocky Votolato's voice is frankly untouchable, and carries so much emotion. Ben Gibbard from DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE also contributes some vocals on a few tracks. The songs are long overall but not dragging, it's often an emotional rollercoaster and the music follows suit.

Available from Thirty Something Records.

—Nab

trigger spontaneous primal can-can in even the most unshakiest of asses. Drums: steady, rhythmic, freaky. Elise's vocals are confident, beautiful, and emotionally evocative without ever feeling affected, recalling the hypnotic highs (first hint of encroaching edge break? bong water unner the bridge, innit?) experienced during the initial digital spin of NUCLEAR FAMILY first foray (I'll thank you for one thing and one thing only, Negative Kevin. You had great taste and a terrible mouth).

I regret not putting this on my best of 2025, but you can still learn from my fuggin' mistakes, True Believers! Let it shine bright, the Light is here!

Edification/revelation imminent.

—Ralph Rivera



HELLSHOCK - XXV

OG Stenchies dropped this huge banger in September. As if they weren't already a goat lineup, they added Todd from

TRAGEDY, solidifying their place in the arena stench cannon. No songs under 4 minutes, every song has epic guitar solos, the bass sounds huge, I can hear the drum skins screaming for mercy, everything on this record sounds huge and it works.

Maybe I listen to too much raw d-beat but this record sounds incredibly polished and suits a band with a history of over 20 years well. They honed their jagged blades to slay the beasts of this hell world and it shows. I would listen to this marching into battle.

Released by Black Water in the US and Agipunk in Europe.

—Vanislejay

KLEPTOCRACY - DEMO 2025 CS

Another incredible release from the most prolific and demonstrably punk scene going in the US, and one that won't make many top 10s 'cause art's fiscal year ends mid-November,



NYC's KLEPTOCRACY kept speakers buzzin' hot and filthy for the final month of '25.

Hardly a release I'd describe as nostalgic, though one needn't stretch the imagination too wide to picture this as

something unearthed from the depths of UK DIY Hardcore by Boss Tuneage or hailed mightily in a forgotten Puszone installment. Strained vocals over evil crust riffs drippin' with thick Big Apple sewer grime, really taking their time and sprawling all over the tracks but never overstaying their welcome, and the drummer has capably carried on the city's proud legacy of scissor beat supremacy while still dropping enough flourishes and experimentations into the mix to keep it interesting.

—Ralph Rivera



MERC - Dehumanized

This is bass- and- drums modern powerviolence that stays on the rails while going way off them.

When I first

listened I was like, I probably would be put off by this band live. I'm not really into bands with just a bunch of angry dudes, but the art was cool, the lyrics were good, political, anti-cop, so I dug a little deeper. Before this project, a close friend of the band passed away, and it seems like this project is almost a grieving project. Men dealing with their emotions in a healthy way? (YES!!)

Then track 7 hits and it's a heavy post punk song? Ok, weird but I don't think they care what I think and that's even better. It's a good song, just like, I'm not generally a post punk fan, and track 8 is back to the pv.

Recipe in the lyrics is chef's kiss.

10/10 from me.

—Vanislejay

Bee's Best-of 2025

Every time I make my year-end best-of list I struggle to remember what the hell even came out in the last 11.5 months. After pouring through my "recent acquisitions/to-be-shelved" pile of records and tapes, revisiting label websites, or what photos I took, I come up with a list that, immediately upon publication, I realize is missing crucial selections. And year and year again I lack the foresight to just write down what I liked that year. Here's my crack at it this year.

ZYCLONE - Visions of Impending Death (General Speech/Re_Vile)

TOTAL CON - This Whole World is Gonna Pay (Brainrotter)

RECALL - Ep (11PM/Broken Skull)

EXIT PLOOM - Live and Death (R.I.P. Peace)

LAUGHING CORPSE - Beyond Recognition (Sorry State)

ENDLESS JOY - S/T (Iron Lung)

ILLITERATES - Does Not Compute (Sorry State)

WHOSE REALITY - Demo (R.I.P. Peace)

TERROR ADVOCATE - Final Demonstration (R.I.P. Peace)

BLACK DOG - Sewn into Confusion (Iron Lung)

AUTO SEAR- Speed Noise Hardcore (Sex Fiend Abomination)

PRAY TO BE SAVED - Demo (Sex Fiend Abomination)

FUCKIN' LOVERS - Crucifixion of the Masses (General Speech)

TOTAL CON - Who Needs the Peace Corps? (Static Shock/Unlawful Assembly)

BRAINBOMBS - I Need Speed/Urge to Kill (Total Black)

PUPPET WIPES - Live Inside (Siltbreeze)

VENEDIKTOS TEMPELBOOM - Huys Opnamen (Minorie)

JONAS TORTENSEN - Viser og countryrock på fynsk (Afvikling Kassetter)

AMATEUR HOUR - Går I Kras (Discreet)

BLOD - Den Oändliga Historien (Discreet)

NICK DRAKE- The Making of Five Leaves Left (Universal)

DEATH KNEEL cassette releases (Life Of Sensation)

Living Water Assembly

Spiritual Endeavour

Ink Wash Apparition

Italan Math

Felix's 2025 Top Ten

#10 FUCKIN' LOVERS - CRUCIFIXION OF THE MASSES

This band is perfect. Captures the stupidity of the style like no one else today. I wonder if they will ever decide to drop the noise and play rock and roll like the later era SWANKYS when they decided to go '77 mode. I could really only love this band more if they did a total musical pivot that made everyone really upset.

FFO: GAI, CONFUSE, ATROCIOUS MADNESS

#9 BLACK DOG - SEWN INTO CONFUSION

AUGH!

FFO: DISCLOSE, FRAMTID, DOOM

#8 PUFFER – STREET HASSLE

If PUFFER's first two EPs could be described as hardcore punk with heavy rock and roll leanings, on their LP they dive headfirst into outrageous capital R – Rock. On "Never Enough" we get the first song by them with an almost WIPERS-esque nostalgic melancholy feel. Personally, I love to hear them dial it back a little and for all the instruments to have a moment to breathe. Would love to see some longer songs on the next release, maybe even an instrumental track??? I doubt they need the encouragement but guys....go nuts. I'm here for it.

FFO: AC/DC, THE SCIENTISTS, THE KIDS

#7 ELECTRIC CHAIR / PHYSIQUE – SPLIT

Like their idols, DISCLOSE, it's hard to pick a right Physique release to listen to sometimes. If you find yourself in that struggle, this is a good go-to. They really excel at not beating riffs to death, hear them twice, they're gone. The ELECTRIC CHAIR side includes maybe their catchiest song. A good split is hard to find, but this will be getting many re-listens.

FFO: FAITH/VOID, TOTALITAR/DISCLOSE, HERESY/CONCRETE SOX

#6 WAYS OF HIDING – S/T

I wish I had seen this band more than one time in 2025 but sadly I only caught their first show. It really made an impression though, being easily one of my favourite live sets last year. It really feels like everyone in this band is bringing their best to this project. Excellent, emotionally effective post punk that pulls on the heart strings without leaning too hard into being dark. Good listening for the next few cold, grey months.

FFO: PLEASURE LEFTISTS, SWEEPING PROMISES, MUSTA PARAATI

#5 RECALL – DEMO II

As much as I loved the 7", the tunes on this Demo Fest release are, in my opinion, their tightest yet. The recording is raw, but very dynamic. The guitars are not so distorted that they go into metal territory, sounding more like the bootpunk of Boston bands like GREEN BERET or SUNSHINE WARD. All the shifts into slower, mosh territory feel very natural, which is hard to pull off in a band like this! Vocals are totally blown out, stopping just short of indecipherable, bringing to mind the distorted vocals of Japanese raw punk like KURO. Track 3, "The Butcher's Smile", is the catchiest punk song I've heard this year. The sort of call-and-response coordination between the vocals and tom rolls on the fourth track are uber satisfying. RECALL's best songwriting yet, praying for an LP.

FFO: RÄKÄNG, SKIT

#4 MANTRACKER – DEMO

My current favourite new Canadian band and one that I hope releases more tunes and (more importantly) tour in 2026. Word on the street is these three saw BLACK DOG and felt a visceral need to play fast. Drums, the most important punk instrument, really pop on this recording and snare rolls go off like the rattle of armalites. Seeing them in St. John's in an alley was maybe my favourite live punk experience of 2025. AUS ROTTEN cover is really the cherry on top. Love love love.

FFO: PROFANE EXISTENCE, PEACEVILLE, CLAY RECORDS

#3 MUJERES PODRIDAS – SANGRE Y SOL

A surprise favourite of mine when DUREX played with them at Noise Not Borders Fest in 2023. I love a speedy closed high hat, shout out to Mr. Scott who always reminds me it's the toughest thing to play on drums. They have perfected that mid-tempo DISCHARGE beat (think "state violence", "a look at tomorrow"), sped up and so filled with hooks that its bordering on sounding like a more raw BUZZCOCKS. There are also faster songs, more in line with THE EJECTED than DISCHARGE. This LP sees the band go even further in the realm of jangly, chorus tinged post punk in the realm of bands like PURA



EXTRAÑA HUMANA – Bailando en la Oscuridad

EXTRAÑA HUMANA inhabits that sweet spot where they scratch a post punk itch but they are still

solidly a punk band. Like there is a lot of delay and reverb, but no one has a fancy swoopy haircut and the hi-hat isn't the entire foundation of the drum beats. I'm saying this all in a positive tone cause this band is really solid and well worth a regular spot in the rotation. The recording is raw but everything is clear in the mix. Everyone fills their spot perfectly, a single guitar with lots of leads while the bass and drums create a really full rhythm section, and the vocals are perfect for this style. I've seen them a bunch and they were always great. Members of UZU, OCIOSA, NUCLEAR FAMILY, and a bunch of other projects. Check them out live if you get the chance.

—Vanislejay



FROM BELOW – The Deeds Of Monsters

This is a pretty cool release, it's got some arena crust vibes but not so polished that they forgot they were

punks. It's fast, great riffs, hard drumming, cool tempo changes, not too much lead guitar, everything cuts through the mix and takes its rightful place. The lyrics are anti-imperial and don't pull any punches, two songs are in English, one in Portuguese. I like it.

Members of CATHARSIS, POINT OF NO RETURN, and BELLAFFEA and very cool cover art by Luciano Feijão.

Check this out if you like early TRAGEDY, FROM ASHES RISE, etc.

Released by Bitter Melody Records (US) and Refuse Records (Europe).

—Vanislejay



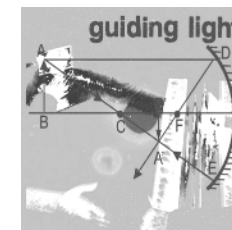
FUGITIVE BUBBLE – What Will Happen If We Stop? LP

The Bubble got scrubbed clean and polished, much to its own

detriment. Some of the songs are still fun, but I preferred the rawness of prior outings. Just like the SUBURBAN LAWNS evoking the circus every time one of the boys needed a turn, the deeper vocals on "What Will Happen If We Stop?" are never my favorite part of the festivities.

Some real fun guitar and manic drum work all over both sides and I believe this would be an incredible piece of work to see live in a sweaty basement or abandoned tunnel or some shit, but not something I see gracing the turntable too terribly often.

—Ralph Rivera



GUIDING LIGHT – GUIDING LIGHT EP

Tucked into even more niche corner of the internet, my initial thoughts

went something like: "Mostly good-to-great. The opener and closer aren't bad, just a little too merish, ya dig? Would love to hear a lot more like "Lost In Voices"; sub-two minutes, jangly, jammin' econo."

Not an all around bad review, though too harsh for something I've repeatedly come back to with excitement. The bass really steals the show for me and does, in fact, boom and bounce econo w/ weighty notes given sentience, like M____ WATT himself spilled some blood or seed and some cosmic starburst went "CLAP! Wake up!" a la oh so many myths of old. The guitars, again, jangle and crackle while maintaining some grit and edge, cuttin' straight down to the dancing bones to

REVIEWS



BFD – Brothers for Decades 7"

I met Riley on tour with SINGLE MOTHERS last year and he instantly became one of my favorite people. He sang in ZERO and

has this new band he drums for called BFD. I actually heard the demo when it came out and thought it was good, but we played with them when this 7inch came out and they were Killer! They play great classic 80's NYHC that brings to mind the likes of CAUSE FOR ALARM, ALTERCATION, or BREAKDOWN. They sit in that perfect mid-paced tempo that makes the songs really groovy and dynamic Kudos to having good lyrics that are actually about something! Out on Total Supply; one of the coolest new labels for up and coming young Hardcore bands, based out of Toronto and Detroit. Hope to see them play more shows

Available from Total Supply.

—Nab



CHRONOPHAGE – MUSICAL ATTACK: COMMUNIST + ANARCHIST FRIENDSHIP 7"

3.75 since 3/4s of this is exactly what I want from the 'PHAGE,

even while the remaining quarter waxes a wee bit AOR if we're being honest with ourselves. (Acht! let's round it up 'cause you'd be hard pressed to find an outfit so consistently earnest in their craft, or as intentional with the delivery thereof).

Two sides, four songs split evenly, soft music for harder times. Think DESPERATE BICYCLES, TV PERSONALITIES, SWELL MAPS LIVE with Johnny P (RIP, for some time), maybe a dash of FEELIES (a real rough trade, eh?) or GREAT PLAINS. Great art by thee comrade Diyana X (nee Shipp) and an actual, factual insert.

—Ralph Rivera



DUKKHA – S/T CS

Lo-fi 3-piece anarcho crust. The note that came with this tape tells me they are split between Youngstown, Ohio

and Pittsburgh. I imagine Youngstown is a bleak town. Halfway between Pittsburgh and Cleveland, and not even on the lake. Where depressive and dark music comes from.

I love the opening riff. It's stupid and stompy. The vibe of this tape roughly fits in the current northeast crust thing happening, so if you like the new crusty bands with solid politics coming out of NY and surrounds (KLEPTOCRACY, CULTURE SHAPING VIOLENCE, etc), you'll like this too. I detect blackened punk influence. There are a lot of really dumb 1-2 drum beat with simple driving riffs that I associate (sonically) with bands like BONE AWL. I'm not a blackened guy, so maybe I don't know what I'm talking about but I liked the mix here. Crust breakdowns, stompy-parts, chugging, blackened dum dum parts and a sprinkling of d-beat!

—Martin Force

MANIA or GENERACION SUICIDA. More blazing punk records should close out with melancholy acoustic guitar.

FFO: CRIATURAS, BLITZ, UGLY SHADOWS

#2 UZU – A QUI LA LIBERTÉ?

Montreal's masters of mid tempo, and probably still our city's most underrated band. All over this record are touches of the darker side of garage punk, not out of place next to bands like RED DONS, or RADIOACTIVITY. That raw speed is filtered through the melancholy SIEKIERA stutter that's all over the recurring palm muted riffs. Track 6, "Ahktanik", which has that punishing drone of a KILLING JOKE song. An improvement on everything that made the first LP so good, can't wait to hear what UZU does next! FFO: MASSHYSTERI, KULTURKAMPF, 1919

#1 ABISM – 7"

I love d-beat. I love a band that can find a way to put a new spin on a genre that's been beaten to death. The guitar tone and the squealing leads feel like something more appropriate to a noise rock record, very reminiscent of the art-school d-beat of BARCELONA. Like that band, everything here is boiled down to its essentials. Absolutely no frills, not a note or a flourish or a bend out of place. FFO: BARCELONA, DESTINO FINAL, TOZIBABE

Honourable Mentions:

MERCY – EP

KLEPTOCRACY – Demo

TOTAL NADA – Aquí y Ahora

DURS COEURS – Crise Cardiaque

COMMITMENT – DEMO

ILLITERATES – Does Not Compute

TRENCHCOAT – DEMO

Greg's 2025 Top Ten

A list of the top 10 (mostly) punk things I loved from 2025 in no real particular order:

ULTIMATE DISASTER – ...For Progress

If I HAD to pick a favorite record from last year, this would likely be it. Might be a perfect record. Live, the band is also great.

KRIEGSHÖG live at Earthdom – Tokyo, Japan 11/16/25

Love & Revenge was on my top 10 list last year and I was lucky my trip to Japan lined up with this show. This set was unreal. An experience I will never forget. The whole show was great. SKIZOPHRENIA played and might have been just as good.

CONDUMB – s/t ep

I already wrote a review explaining why I loved this record (issue x). It's gotten a lot of play this year.

CATHARSIS – Hope Against Hope lp

Another one I gushed about (issue x) and continues to stay in rotation. A band whose presence is as poignant as it was in the 90's.

MEM//BRANE – s/t lp

I love this band so much, and another record I reviewed for The Counterforce. I believe MEM//BRANE is no longer an active band which makes me sad but I heard a rumor they are putting out another 7" in 2026 so I'll hold on to that as a consolation prize.

URIN live at Foto Club – Philadelphia, PA 3/7/25

Prior to this show, I had heard URIN before but was generally indifferent. I went to this show because I didn't have anything else to do that night, and holy shit I am still thinking about their set. Crushing, chaotic, and dissonant.

RASKOL live at Cousin Danny's – Philadelphia, PA 1/10/25

I saw one of the worst sets I have ever seen by THE BERSERK at this show. I audibly booed when they finished. RASKOL on the other hand played one of the best sets I've seen from them. The energy was palpable as they say. The band fed off the crowd. The crowd fed off the band. I might have moshed.

ADDISON RAE – Addison lp

There's usually one yearly moment of pop music that I cannot shake. This year there were 2 (luckily I'll get to save ROBYN's new record for next year's list). On paper ADDISON RAE's music shouldn't really do it for me. It's a little more mainstream pop than I typically like and I'm not a huge fan of songs about fucking, but god damn this record is great front to back. I don't know if she has a song I don't actually like. Great live too.

OKLOU – Choke Enough lp

The second pop offering of 2025 that I obsessed over. This is much more my speed when it comes to pop music. "Harvest Sky" might be one of my favorite songs written since "Call Your Girlfriend". My most listened to song of the year for sure.

SHAKTI – s/t lp

I don't think this record blew me away but I do love listening to it and have a lot this year. It's cool peace punk. "The Riz Ahmed" intro is a little weird since they just lifted it from his record and is about Britain and this band, I believe, is from Barcelona, but I guess it works. Despite how lukewarm this sounds, it really is a great record.

Top Ten Moments of Rock 2025

By Hampton / Earth Girl Tapes

Let's be honest, I hardly listened to anything new this year, let alone remember it enough to discuss. My most listened to song this year was easily "Concerto In X Minor" by BRAND NUBIAN, if that helps put you in the headspace I'm in. The older I get, the more time I spend as a freak rocker, the more I put value on live performances and experiences in DIY rather than generic 4-song demos fast hardcore with flirtations of a d-beat riff. So with that I'm gonna hit you with my top ten moments of ROCK in chronological order.

Louisville Snowstorm

BAD ANXIETY and SILO KIDS embarked on a short winter tour early in January. We ended up driving right into bad weather. The first show of the tour was canceled because of snow and ice. We saw snow everywhere on this trip, but nothing like Louisville. Cars swerving, punks shoveling parking spots, so others could park, actually dangerous bad weather. After the fact we all agreed, this show should have been canceled. But the conditions just amplified the experience. Only the realest of freaks braved the weather to see us play in a detached garage, the set was bonkers and everyone was just smiling and stoked to be there. Living in the deep south, I don't experience snow. I soon won't forget white-knuckle driving the rental van while doing my best to encourage the troops that we wouldn't spin out and die, to then play the most fun set of the tour. Highly recommend Louisville in winter.

nostalgia-brained, but it's not either/or here. The technology exists for us to connect with each other outside of the genocide factory. It's been nice to see these disparate freaks with niche interests utilize Neocities, and the proprietors of this here dirt rag have been some of the biggest champions of the Fediverse. The almighty Souleek has never gone down, you can still interact with Old School Mike and his literal thousands of hardcore punk records, then connect an aux from your computer to a receiver and make a tape, or put all of that on your phone and forego streaming altogether.

If none of these things feel right to you, the world shakes with palpable anticipation for your solution. Better or worse is irrelevant, it simply must be done.

There's little left to say this month, my brain feels addled after all that ramblin'. My journey into the depths of Thee Canon was brief and shallow this last so long, but I did dig into one frumeach. SUBHUMANS – Demolition War 7" is the first indication that Pushead's tastes and mine will not entirely align. Some starter punk bands stand the test of time, but Dick & Co. really only have a handful of songs I enjoy ("People Are Scared", "No"), not one of which is found here.

Prank's #3, however, remains as potent today as ever. In the six-song MLP era, its almost inconceivable to think that a hardcore punk album could maintain its intensity (or that a reels-addled public could keep its focus) for longer than 20 minutes, but HIS HERO IS GONE – Fifteen Counts of Arson LP is a monstrosity that lingers beyond the length of the groove.

Flyin' down the Wire is ALBERT AYLER's Live In Greenwich Village. I highly recommend it, though not in one sitting, which makes total sense as it's a collection of two separate performances recorded at the tail end of the 60s. As experimental as the Wire's previous two entries, though no less unrelenting than HHIG, this is Jazz at it's absolute apex.

'Til next time, True Believers.

*If you've got yer output hosted on this wretched platform, congratulations! You've sold out and didn't even get fractions of a penny for your troubles. Mainstream bands such as MASSIVE ATTACK and XIU XIU have pulled their catalogs from the platform. You can still do it, too.
@ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/trending/spotify-faces-boycott-calls-over-ceos-investment-defence-startup>
~ <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/spotify-ice-recruitment-ads/>
% All this said, no one is perfect. Deep in pandemic, naive as fuck, I flirted with the possibility that Midjourney Generative AI's four imperfect squares promised. I even found a random generation of a gang of skinheads and attached it to a flier for a show I was promoting, my name along with it. I truly didn't know where these images might be sourced from, but I paid attention to what was being said around me and have never used it since. Alas, one may only use "I'm An Idiot" as an excuse so many times.

THINK!

column 2

o. ANON ANON AND ON AND ON AND ON AND ON AND ON

Yeah, no, I get it. Someone might poke fun at you. Someone might poke holes in yer not-so-tidy whities. Someone might not like you. (Or, worse yet, someone just might...)

i. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AT THE GENOCIDE FACTORY

A fun thing every December is the big, panopticon-sanctioned recap of one's consumption habits (co-sponsored by Big P-roductivity). "Look!", it says, "I'm engaged in arts and partake in culture! AMYL & THE SNIFFERS lurked in the background of my each-and-every suicidal ideation, tilting the wheel imperceptibly just this side of zero degrees, while i yearned in private desperation for just one chance glance to toss me, end over end, one lane to the next, lest I pour one more Americano for some app-developing, balding Wicker Park fuck!" And then, with dull joy, we press play on Jan. 1 (1 Jan for those elsewhere) and the cycle continues anon.

But check it: Spotify fucking sucks. There is no debating this. Daniel Ek, like all CEOs, is an anti-art dullard, part and parcel to the ubiquitous and unyielding spread of the Tech Reich. The damage they've caused to mainstream music is likely irreparable and has been enumerated endlessly*. They've invested in war crimes® and ran ICE recruitment ads*. If the former transgressions were not enough, the latter should leave no wiggle room. And yet, the Big discourse (online, exclusively): self-assured -righteous & -informed (look no further than above!), all sides bleating back and forth, devolving inevitably into smarmy vagueposts underpinned by logical fallacies and loosey-goosey morals, marching ever onward, far past the last hard line, full-throated in our chants of "No ethical consumption under capitalism!" The rebuttal? Fuck off.

This phrase was never intended to mean "Do nothing." This phrase was never meant to assuage the guilt of ignoring each and every hard decision. Yes, those in power have corralled us all: Nestle poisons the water and the mothers and children who drink it, and Coke kills union organizers in South America, and Bob Iger cuts the ribbon at Disneyland Tel Aviv, but it's still your choice to buy a Night Sprite for half-price entry. No ethical consumption, but not all consumption is so hopelessly, vilely unethical.

Maybe, you're right. In fact, many of you are probably right: many of the online crusaders will abandon the current *cause celebre* for surer victories, like online campaigns to prevent Meta from soft-blocking activists, or begging Congressmen to limp-dickedly condemn an ongoing genocide, each surely one digital signature or two from fruition.

And yes, of course, we are confronted daily by seemingly impossible choices, exacerbated by intentionally esoteric branding and the infinite conglomeration of all things into one corporate eldritch mass, the increasingly brutality swept into banality by the 24hr news cycle. No one can have any way of knowing all things,% but many have ways of knowing some things, and those things should be acted upon. Not everything is a grey, unknowable mass.

ii. GREASE

In the caverns of my cranium, a truer meaning resonates: the walls are closing in, what will you do about it motherfucker?

iii. WELL?

I think my biggest issue with all of this is the tacit resignation to this idea that all things must be done under the auspices of some vaunted authority, that truly nothing may be accomplished without their existing infrastructure. Something as simple as a list of things you like must be collated and compiled by the same machine that put it all in front of you in the first place and this feels truly fucking insane to me.

For many, some form of primal atavism and/or monk-like asceticism are unlikely, yeah?, and in any case, this desire feels unhealthily

SILO KIDS vs BAD ANXIETY – Battle Set

This was the year of the battle set in Hattiesburg. Once we realized we had a big enough venue, enough gear, and bands that didn't share any members, we knew what we had to do. This show in January set the tone for the rest of the year, shows with gimmicks, having fun, doing things other scenes simply won't do. So many people say they've never seen or been a part of a battle set. Or that they haven't done that since they were 16. Time to bring it back. They rule.

ABI OOZE and JUDY AND THE JERKS

The OOZE crew and the JUDY crew went out on a nice midwestern tour this year. The tour rocked, but we capped it all off with a gig in Hattiesburg. Huge gig, everyone having fun, tossing balloons, throwing around props, people moshing with whatever object they could get a hold of. Whoops, I tried to lift Nevada from ABI OOZE onto my shoulder while they played, and they fell face first and fucked up their guitar. Whoops. SILO KIDS covered a JUDY AND THE JERKS song. Our friend Sophia played their first set EVER by playing bass for one JUDY song while I got to mosh for my own band. It was just a crazy sick gig that was a true celebration of friendship in my favorite little town in America.

PRIMAL BRAIN at Everything is Not Okay 4.5 in Oklahoma City, OK

I really like the band PRIMAL BRAIN from Oklahoma City. Amazing people making amazing music. Saw this band twice(?) this year and each time was incredible. But we're going to focus on the set at Everything Is Not Okay 4.5. You may have read my previous gripes about that fest. But one of the few redeeming factors was this set. Nothing better than seeing your friends play an incredible set, people go OFF, crawling around on stage during the mosh parts because you know all the songs. It was a blast and made me pump my fist in the air in ultimate satisfaction.

SILO KIDS at Gluesniffer Fest in Murfreesboro,TN

Similar to seeing PRIMAL BRAIN, there really is nothing better than seeing your friends' band dominate a set, command an entire room, and leave everyone begging for more. This time, I actually had the opportunity to play drums for SILO KIDS for this set, but I still felt like I got to be there as an observer to such an incredible set performed by the real current rulers of Hattiesburg. You can read more about it here. A legendary rock moment.

VIVA LA THRASH! in Nagoya, Japan

Describing VIVA LA THRASH! is not an easy task, I recommend just looking up a video online. It's two dudes, decked out in some silly gear, playing to a backing track of a weird mix of pop tunes and digital fastcore riffage. One guy just walks in a circle performing and singing and does a funny jump at the end of the song, the other member doesn't move a muscle and just plays the songs from a little device. It was like watching a comedy sketch, but played as a serious band. I knew going into this set it was going to be fun as hell and I would love it. The crowd loved every song, circle pitting with the main guy, crowd-surfing. They started the set off with an a cappella version of We Will Rock You by QUEEN with "Vi-va, Vi-va, Viva La Thrash!" for entirely too long. True weirdos doing weirdo shit. We didn't speak each other's languages, but we spoke volumes by just patting each other on the back saying "Viva La Thrash!" multiple times all night.

C.A.FEISSNER in Ashikaga, Japan

This show had it all. A competing gig in the same building with Japanese Rockabillys, muscle cars and poodle skirts and all. Friends laughing and having fun watching sick bands. An actual child moshing and the whole crowd mimicking her actions, letting her lead the crowd. And most importantly, C.A.FEISSNER from Sendai, Japan. Furious, no-

nonsense Japanese hardcore punk. The front person was wearing an all white suit, holding up a custom bound book, whose contents were taken from old Japanese zines describing the burgeoning US hardcore punk scene. We were told that these zines were very influential in Japan, and here they were bound in a book, gold tassel, looking like a version of the Punk Bible. The front person was holding it up, going to the pages of BLACK FLAG, MINOR THREAT, and so on during the set. All while playing like his life depended on it. Every member of the band played like this was the craziest show that had ever happened. Not a dull moment, no moment to catch your breath, just an assault of pure hardcore punk like this was the last show on earth. It was inspiring. C.A.FEISSNER is a band you watch, and it sticks with you. In the words of C.A.FEISSNER "This is Sendai, not US".

BAD ANXIETY at the Jackson Folk Fest in Jackson, MS

This was a surreal gig. BAD ANXIETY was asked to be part of the 'Punk Block' for the 82nd National Folk Festival that was being held in Jackson, MS this year. Seemed odd, but the Folk Festival seemed like a really cool thing. A big multi-day event focusing on the music and art of the people in the area. So many incredible blues, gospel, and jazz acts performed. Booths from all sorts of local artists, even a zine making booth and a skate demo. It was rad. The stages for this event were huge. Like a big open air festival with markets and vendors, chairs for seating. This was a very 'normal' festival, and a huge one at that. This was going to be an awkward set for a very strange crowd. Before the show, we all agreed to play it like any other gig, go crazy and speak in between songs like you would with any other show. That includes curse words thrown at certain political figures, calling issues out by name, so on and so forth. Let me remind you this was in the deep south at the most normal of normal music events. Before we played, I literally had to beg for anyone who is able to please stand up and come closer to the stage, or we would die from awkwardness. Luckily, a lot of people did and we thankfully had plenty of friends there. The set was awesome, people had fun and danced, cheered us on when we called for the head of the current governor. What could have been the most awkward set of our lives ended up being extremely rewarding. So many folks afterward thanked us for saying what we said and for playing with such intensity. For some younger kids, this was their first time seeing punk live, and they loved it. They begged us for more info on how to find shows and bands. A few people in the crowd were disgusted sure, the police were called on us while we were playing. But they didn't do anything and no one cut our set short, all 12 minutes of it. The other bands on the 'Punk Block' were a noise act and a garagey kinda band. So, even there, we kinda stuck out hard. All the awkwardness was way worth it.

YAHHO in Hattiesburg, MS

This year I booked the biggest show I've ever booked. While we don't have a total count for sure, but we guess it was near 200 people, on a Tuesday, in Hattiesburg, MS. Maybe for you that doesn't seem crazy but for us it did. Everyone was there to see YAHHO, a chiptune hardcore punk one man band from Okayama, Japan. His music is very hard to describe, so I recommend just looking it up yourself. He is an insane performer and captivated the whole crowd. People were crowd-surfing the whole time, screaming like they were watching the Beatles, just an insane chaos dance party. At one point, YAHHO climbed onto the roof of the venue and just performed from up there. The crowd lost it. At the end of the night he had a line of folks wanting to take pictures and get autographs. It was an insane reception that none of us had anticipated. Even the other band on tour with YAHHO, HAVANA SYNDROME (Buffalo, NY), had a crazy set. There was a wall of death for this synth punk band. It was nuts.

BASTARD IDOL – Demo 2025

Toronto-based recording project collab between Emily of TORPOR and INFLUX and Melody of HUMAN FORM. BASTARD IDOL has a live lineup with two Montreal members, and they've played one show in Montreal with a second one happening around the time this will be published... Not sure if it will be an ongoing full band but I hope so!

DISDICK S/T

Some DEMO FEST projects come about when someone realizes they should finally complete some unfinished project. DISDICK seems to have been in production hell for almost 20 year. Drum machine hardcore punk with mysterious origins. It's shocking no one has used the name before.

EGIDE – Demo

This demo was a total surprise from strangers in Quebec City. Perfectly executed mid 2000s crust. Usually time machine crust like this from Quebec (or Europe) falls totally flat for me. But not in this case! EGIDE is seemingly a recording project with members of ANEANTIX, but I hope they but together a live lineup and we see them at Varning this year.

IT CHOOSES YOU – Demo 25'

Scrappy an unpretentious hardcore that only a small town like Halifax can produce. This kind of demo gives me hope for the future of punk.

NORMAL NOW – Demo

The result of a last minute DEMO FEST sprint by Kelly from RECALL/DUREX and Evan from PSYCHIC ARMOR and CELL. NORMAL NOW shows once again that Evan is a deep well of creative and weird songwriting (see also OUCH! from DEMO FEST 2020).

PICEA – Boreal Raw Punk

DEMO FEST received more submissions from Homer, Alaska than anywhere else outside of Montreal. It seems like a whole crew of people there embraced the spirit of DEMO FEST and got together in several different configurations to spit out a pile of raw noisy punk demos. This one from PICEA has fit into my regular listening.

PROGRESS? – DEMO 2025

PROGRESS? is a proper new Montreal band who managed to rush out this debut recording in time for DEMO FEST. CF contributor Misery plus members of DUREX, DEADBOLT and NO WAR.

RECALL – DEMO II

Local heroes RECALL crammed to record a raw 4 song demo for DEMO FEST and it turned out amazing. I am sure you will hear more from this band this year.

RITALIN F.M. – Demo

I thought I would hate it but I love it. From the mind of GLASS DOLLS and you'll hear familiar things here but pushed in even weirder directions. Is it just a troll or is it so sincere it hurts?

SYNAPTIC ISOLATION SYNDROME – Consuming Mental Isolation

Montreal super-group with members of PORTAL TOMB, DRIP, WARKRUSHER and BALLAST (sorry Dave but it's true). I think it was originally pitched to me as some kind of crasher crust but in my (naive) opinion they ended up with more of a blistering fast hardcore crust sound. And a fun DOOM cover. "Crust!"

TRENCHCOAT – DEMO

The new IFO house band? Seb from DEADBOLT lineup joins Evan from PSYCHIC ARMOUR and CELL plus CF contributor Corn. My guess is Seb and P-lou are finally getting to explore songwriting directions that falls outside of the DEADBOLT purview. More stripped down hardcore punk, but they still can't resist rocking with solos and bass lines.

Bonus: THE STEVE LAKE EXPERIENCE – The Feast of Stephen

After visiting Montreal to play with ZOUNDS, Steve heard about DEMO FEST and immediately committed to contribute something from his bottomless pile of unfinished tracks. DEMO FEST magic. A cosmic synth-based track followed by two sprawling rainy-day tracks that are vaguely psychedelic. A great way to cap off your DEMO FEST listening experience!

—Martin Force

Columna Marginal – December 2025

I hate this kind of list, but I'll do it for The Counterforce. I do not always discover the music of the current year, many times I find it too late. And I can't say I really loved albums I listened a couple times if they were released in December (or discovered at the end of the year). Also, I forgot about music I discovered in January!

How can you do this in a proper, relaxed way? I just can't. It stresses me out to decide whether an album is better or not, but I definitely enjoyed some albums and bands this year and I hope this list puts them all together.

SÖT – Crema-ho Tot

DESTRUXION AMERICA – Gritos Norteño

LAME – Lo que extrañas ya no existe

SAYÓN – Demo 2025

LAKRA – S/T

KALEIDOSCOPE – Cities Of Fear

MERCY – EP

AYUCABA – Operación Masacre

UNIDAD IDEOLÓGICA – Choque Asimétrico

RIPCORD – Damage is Done
(the reissue in LVEUM)

ZYFILIS – Don't Fear

TÀRREGA 91 – Ckaos Total

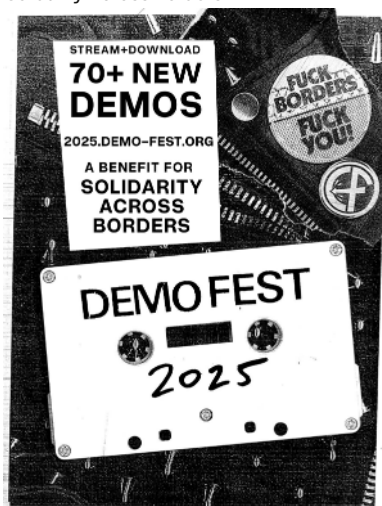
I also would like to say that I listened to LIFELESS DARK's "Forces of Nature's Transformation" frequently this year, and it's an amazing album. It doesn't matter when you read this, it will still be a great album. And same for LUMPEN's "Exterminación"! A proof that this already veteran band will be a classic from the rotten city of Barcelona.

—Marginal



I Will Do My Worst #2

In lieu of a year end top ten list, I present to you a dirty dozen of selections from DEMO FEST 2025. In case you missed it, over 70 bands/musicians put together a new demo in October and November this year for our 2nd installment of DEMO FEST. All those releases are available online at 2025.demo-fest.org and all proceeds from donations/downloads go to the local Montreal mutual aid group Solidarity Across Borders.



I simply could not narrow this selection down to 10 releases, so it's 12. And even that was difficult, and many excellent releases were overlooked. I strongly suggest you check out the full collection of 70+ demos (and remember to donate) at 2025.demo-fest.org. In alphabetical order, here's the list:

AMARGI – La única respuesta: la anarquía

One man band from Counterforce contributor Marginal. I think AMARGI wins the DEMO FEST award for "farthest traveled", contributing from Barcelona.

Wheel of Misfortune

I love a dumb idea. I thrive off a gimmick. No more gimmicky set can be had than the BAD ANXIETY vs SILO KIDS "Wheel Of Misfortune" Battle Set. Not only was this a battle set, this had the WHEEL. The Wheel Of Misfortune is a real big spinning wheel I made that has 10 slices. Each slice has a "misfortunate" thing the band that last spun must do. Examples include – play blindfold, play dizzy, switch members, play slow. The list goes on. It was dumb, whacky, stupid, and fun. The battle part made it even sillier. Watching SILO KIDS struggle through playing a song after spinning for 30 seconds and getting dizzy was incredible. BAD ANXIETY went first and when I spun the wheel it landed on 'MIME', we had to play our first song completely silent but acting like we were still going off being crazy. It was so dumb and awesome, people moshed, we didn't make a peep.

Jay's 2025 Top Ten

2025 was a pretty good year for punk releases and as always this was a really challenging task to narrow down to just 10. This list spans pretty much the entire year, one of these dropped on January 1st, and a few dropped on December 21st.

PROGRESS? – Demo 2025

MEM//BRANE – Subcutaneous EP

TOTAL NADA – Aquí y Ahora

BRUTE – Barbarism

PORTAL TOMB / EXTENSIVE SLAUGHTER – Split 7"

AMERETAT – S/T

RECALL – Demo II

UZU – À qui la liberté? من الحرية

EXTRAÑA HUMANA – Bailando en la Oscuridad

HARAM – Why does Paradise Begin in Hell

Nab's 2025 Year In Review

A bonkers year in terms of new music. I could legitimately not keep up with the amount of cool releases coming out, especially the sheer number of ripping hardcore demos. I'm a little bummed how North-American centric my list is but it is what it is. Very proud of the record we put out with SPITE HOUSE as well.

Albums

ALEX G – Headlights

BAD BEAT – LP 2025

C4 – Payback's a Bitch

COMBUST – Belly Of The Beast

MILITARIE GUN – God Owes Me Money

SCARAB – Burn After Listening

SOMERSET THROWER – Take Only What You Need to Survive

SPIRITUAL CRAMP – Rude

SUZZALLO – The Quiet Year

THE STARTING LINE – Eternal Youth

Demos

DEAD ON YOUR FEET – D.O.Y.F.
DIRECT ORDER – Demo 2025
FRÖTHING MAD – Demo
MADMAN – The Demo
ORDER OF LIVING – Demo
PRICE OF REDEMPTION – Demo 2025
SIXLET – Demo
TRUE FRAUD – Demo 2025
WITS END – Demo I
W.M.D – Demo I

*I made a digital mixtape
with my favourite songs
of the year too:*



EPs

EXO – S/T EP
LEAD SPIRIT – Self Titled EP
METHOD OF DOUBT – Total Soul Ignition 7”
MIL-SPEC – S/T 12”
SHADOW TIDES – Self-Titled
THE FINAL AGONY – Deprived From Darkness 7”

Reissues

AMENITY – This is Our Struggle: Anthology 1989–2009
FORCED DOWN – Liberate
LEATHERFACE – The Peel Sessions LP
MILTOWN – Tales of Never Letting Go

Honorable mentions:

KALEIDOSCOPE, ETHEL CAIN, CATHARSIS, MOMMA, FEAR OF SIN...

P-Lou's 2025 Top Ten

Another great year for stinky people making music! I found myself listening to a lot of new music this year which is always a good thing! I am also very excited that most of my favourite releases of 2025 were made by friends. Great year for my crew, close and afar!! Here's my top ten in no particular order:

RECALL – Recall (11pm records)
TOTAL NADA – Aquí y Ahora (11pm Records)
BASTARD IDOL – Demo 2025 (Demo Fest 2025)
NORMAL NOW – Demo (Demo Fest 2025)
HEALING – Healing demo (Roachleg Records)
SPLEEN – Demo II (Roachleg Records)
PUFFER – Street Hassle (Static Shock Records)
SUBJECTS – S/T (Youth Attack)
KLEPTOCRACY – Demo (self release??)
FOOL'S BLOOD – S/T (Total Supply)

This year again, the sub 10mins records reign supreme!!

Finally, please hype up the fest! Where can people go to get more into if they want to attend, play, or volunteer? Is there anything else you want to shout out or add?

Christina: Yes! Please find us here:

ktownhardcorefest.org

pixelfed.social/ktownhardcorefest

(to follow from your own account, search **@ktownhardcorefest@pixelfed.social**)

ungdomshuset.dk

Subscribe to our newsletter for direct mail about lineup, tickets and practical info – we promise we won't be spamming you.

**K-town Hardcore Fest 2026 will be
taking place June 19–24, 2026.
See you there!**

Christina: K-Town has always been international. But in later years it became more than it was before. Like I talked about earlier, we built the first festival on international (mostly European) mobilization, so a lot of people who have been coming every year since the beginning, are international. It was somewhat a coincidence but it's not one that we regret :)

I like to believe that we share a special connection with the bands, volunteers and guests at the festival. We take great care in making everyone feel welcome and part of the fest. We strive to make people feel equally seen and included, no matter if you scrub toilets or play guitar in the evening closer band. I sincerely hope we succeed in that ... Many people choose to come back after having played, as guests the following year, and we have many of the same volunteers coming in from all over the world every year, to participate in the annual family event. This cannot be attributed to social media platforms, but to connections and friendships between people, the feeling of being part of something valuable and important — and having a great fucking time while doing it obviously!

Booking for the 2026 fest has started. What has the experience been like so far with this change? What has the reception been like to your new position?

Christina: With three weeks left before the application window ends, we have 370 bands on our list, so I'd say nothing has changed there, haha. Generally, we have gotten a lot of positive feedback from people. No negative so far, except a bit of "whataboutism" here and there, which is hardly a criticism worth taking in.

On Instagram, we have turned off comments, because we don't want to interact with the platform any longer, but our posts about the exit have been shared more than usual. We have a feeling that's not a negative thing.

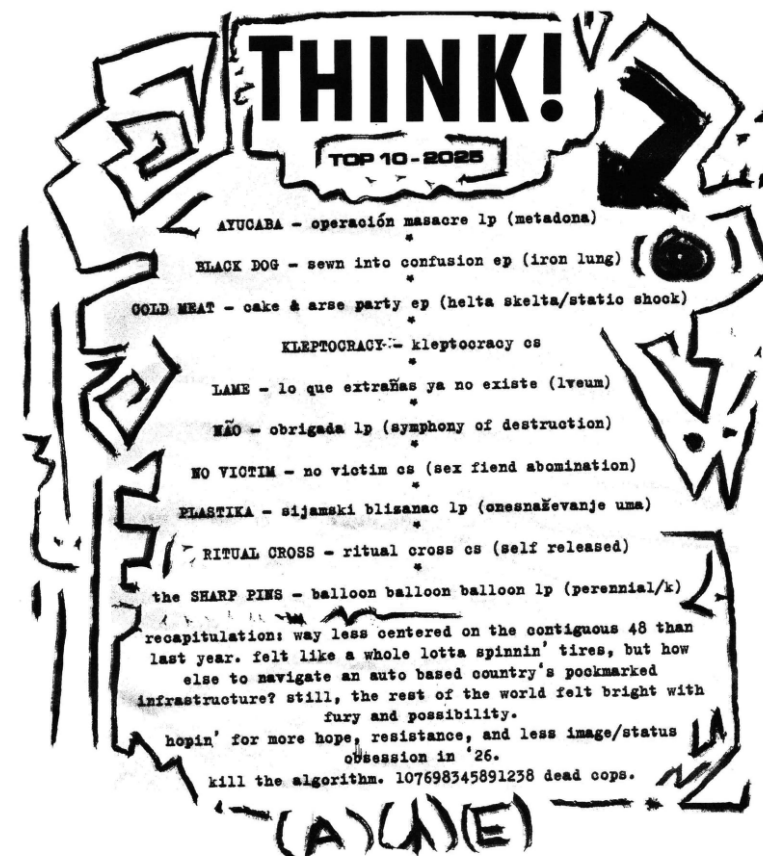
Mathias: 370 band requests is more than we usually get. For the past years the average has been ~300, so so far so good I guess.

Do you have any other advice for other DIY festivals or other punk projects who want to follow your lead?

Christina: Have good talks about why you want to leave. What does it cost your integrity to stay vs what do you gain by staying? Be brave and risk it. But stop being lazy. Organizing is hard work and we'd be lying if we said it was easy.

Get a website or a blog or use an existing platform, from your local political network, the squat/houseproject/venue you're hosting at or whatever digital resource you have available. Make posters and flyers and think of ways to spread them so the people interested in coming will see them ahead of time. Who are your international friends? Who are your friends, locally? Reach out and use your network of friends!

Mathias: Yeah, start by moving away from Meta's platforms. PixelFed is almost a 1:1 copy of Instagram, so there's no real learning curve. You can even import all of your content from Instagram to PixelFed, so you keep all of your memories, even if you nuke your Instagram profile. Other than that, I agree with what Christina is saying here — and let's all ditch Google too, ok?



Slim's Top 10 sets of 2025

In no particular order:

PHYSIQUE @ Scorched Earth (Vancouver, BC)
YELLOWCAKE @ Scorched Earth
FUCKIN' LOVERS @ Search For The Sun (Montreal)
DECEPT @ Batiment 7 (Montreal)
WARKRUSHER @ Batiment 7
UNCLE @ PEI Farm Center
DEVIATED INSTINCT @ Scorched Earth
BASTARD IDOL @ Sotterenea
ONE TRACK MIND's Ontario run
CONTAGIUM @ Scorched Earth

Taylor Joy's Top Ten Shows of 2025

I was fortunate enough to be able to travel to both the easternmost and westernmost islands of Canada for punk in 2025 (almost made it to the Yukon for a mini-tour this year but it fell through! Maybe someday...) These tours and trips, plus some awesome shows in my home of Montreal, defined my year more than any records that I listened to, so to roundup 2025 I compiled my top ten shows (in chronological order).

New Year's Eve Squat Show (NYC, undisclosed location) – December 31

Rang in 2025 in relatively balmy New York, getting to watch excellent bands like FLOWER, ABISM and LOVE & COMPASSION in a mess of punks, taggers, trains, burning flags and fireworks. The lack of flat surfaces in the illicit "venue" made everything extra chaotic, not entirely sure how all the people on nitrous managed to stay upright (edit: turns out maybe they didn't). Happy I finally made it to one of these infamous NYC generator shows, it was an ideal way to start the year!

New Band Show (Montreal, La Sotterenea) – February 23

Despite frosty temps and feet of snow on the ground, this year's edition of the New Band Show went off without a hitch and is becoming a Montreal winter tradition. Despite not being strictly locals, the instrumental section of POISON SPEAR made it out from PEI to knock our socks off. Tons of teenagers came out to the show, and I have this short video saved of a bunch of teens in corpse paint doing a can-can kickline during LIFELINE. The DUREX tape release show was the night before, and I think some of the energy from that spilled over into this event and made for a really fun deep-winter weekend.

VERIFY tour stop in St. John's (Peter Easton Pub) – April 18

Wrote about this in my Atlantic Canada tour reportback (issue #6) but I finally made it to Newfoundland this year and it didn't disappoint! This tour was amazing, but was also plagued by various stresses and misfortunes, so I think something about actually making it to St. John's made the show at the Peter Easton feel extra cathartic. I fell in love with the wild weirdness of the land and the scene in St. John's.

Scorched Earth Fest (Vancouver, Rickshaw Theatre) – July 24-25

In July I traveled to Vancouver and Victoria, BC for the dual purposes of attending Scorched Earth fest and reuniting with my partner after a monthlong tour. It's hard to name fest highlights because the bill was totally stacked, but CONTAGIUM's reunion set



Mathias: It's still very new, and we haven't really posted anything yet (but will soon enough). I hope punks will join us on PixelFed soon – the more we are, the funner it gets, I guess.

Christina: Agree. It's all still so new, and we rarely post anything this time a year anyways. I guess it was a good time to quit, because it gave us some time to build content and think of ways of communicating, before diving into it. Honestly, we have mostly found the Counterforce guide to be helpful and very inspiring, and I don't say that just to flatter you – but it's the first guide I've found, directed at punks and DIY organizers. I dare say that you helped us believing we could do this! Thank you for that. In Denmark, the main people interested in this stuff are not punks.

Mathias: The Counterforce zine (manifesto) was pretty inspiring, heh!

Are there any other things you are doing to try and exit Meta this year that you want to expand upon?

Mathias: Not really Meta-related, but we have discussed leaving Google too. I think we should, and that's gonna be less difficult, I imagine, in terms of whatever 'feelings' might be attached to their platforms and services. We are not really saying goodbye to an audience when getting a new email account, right? But we still need time to properly research alternatives, since we are using a lot more applications than just Gmail. We have plans of making a newsletter too. So you can get all news and deadlines regarding K-Town directly in your inbox.

Christina: We are going to let our Instagram page stay up for a while, so people can still find us and see where we went. But the Facebook page will be killed entirely at some point. We will probably use the Instagram page for purposes related to the exit. That way we are not just preaching to the choir, but to the people still on that platform, when talking about the exit. Spreading materials from the Punk Fediverse month is part of that.

Fun fact: We weren't always on Google mail... our first email address was on Riseup, but at some point (around 2010 as I remember it) they were having loads of problems with their servers and we lost access to our account and weren't able to recover it. That threw us into the hands of Evil.inc :(

Another thing I really respect about K-Town Hardcore Fest is how international it is, both in the lineup of bands and in the diversity of the attendees. We have to admit that Meta's slick and easy social media has allowed for greater international connections and solidarity than ever before. I think that in moving away from these platforms a major challenge will be maintaining strong international connections between scenes around the world. I wonder if you all have thoughts on this challenge going forward?

Mathias: I think you are right. It's gonna be a real challenge. Instagram made it soooo convenient to stay in touch with your international friends, or 'add' all the new people you met at a festival.

some, because you're fighting against corporate algorithm tricks. Urgh. I long back to a time where active participation was key. And it's a sad truth that most punks are just consumers now.

What drove the decision was a mix of the new reality we all faced when the yellow baby was elected again and all the tech bros lined up behind him, and the general things Mathias is also mentioning. We saw people starting to make coordinated exits, some of us exited ourselves, and it led us to have a look in the mirror and ask the question: can you defend being the oxymoron it is to be a political DIY festival, doing your main promotion on big tech platforms??

Sometimes making big decisions as a large collective can be difficult. Without hashing out any internal conflicts, can you say if this was a contentious decision among the collective? Were there holdouts or people skeptical or opposed to the idea? If so, what eventually won them over?

Christina: I think it's fair to say that we are all a bit nervous about the move. There's not been grave opposition within the group, but for sure some people feel more energetic about it than others.

Mathias: I wasn't super sold on the idea of leaving in the beginning, as I liked having a direct platform from which we could engage directly with our audience. I thought we were saying goodbye to too much, by leaving...

Christina: Yeah, I think it's a delicate balance between choosing what's right and what's convenient. We have more than 11,400 followers on Instagram, for example. I don't think anyone really disagrees with the fact that the big tech companies have way too much power over punk, and that the right thing to do is to abandon them and take back control. But how to do this is another question. We're "just" a punk festival. We're not a network of radical internet activists. And our main priorities lies in making our festival as good as possible, while being a positive example within our community, so that people will hopefully be inspired to stay or become radical themselves. But will we change or inspire, if no one's looking?

I think idealism won in the end. And it's a gamble, if it will truly work. But we choose to believe that it will and that we are an "established" enough event, to survive the setback in reach we will eventually meet.

I have already really respected that K-Town Hardcore Fest has a comprehensive and useful website. That's somewhat of a rarity these days (at least in North America), although I am happy to see more festivals returning to having a functional website instead of relying solely on Instagram. You say you plan to use your website a lot more in the future... What do you have planned?

Mathias: Just to use it more, hah! To have more overall and general information about the fest, bands and tickets and so on. I am the main admin for the site and have to admit that I did a terrible job at keeping it up to date last year. I also really want to give it a visual overhaul soon too.

With regards to PixelFed/the Fediverse, what has your experience been like so far? Have you found any explanations, resources, or guides that are particularly helpful?

was great, DEVIATED INSTINCT were delightful and managed to captivate my attention through a very long set, plus many beloved friends' bands such as BLACK DOG, EXTENSIVE SLAUGHTER, STREET GLOVES and PORTAL TOMB fleshed out an absolutely crushing lineup. The matinée show with PHYSIQUE, YELLOWCAKE and BARREN SOIL was awesome top-to-bottom, although I got the wind knocked out of me during PHYSIQUE's set because I was stupidly standing next to a chest-height table while the crowd went nuts. Worth it!! The main shows were in a huge theatre, and while the sound wasn't ideal, the seating in the back and balcony were a real blessing for all the aging crust war vets with bad backs. Shared a dreamy post-fest beach day with two dozen punks, followed by a peaceful walk through giant trees in Stanley Park and a huge crew rolling up to share awesome family-style vegan Chinese food. It was a hard comedown back to reality after this one.

Secret Trash Fest (Charlottetown, PEI Farm Centre) – August 23

I had so much fun playing PEI in April that I begged the Secret Beach crew to bring my other band RECALL out for the inaugural Secret Trash Fest in August. I was really hyped to see east coast pv duo UNCLE play, and I really wanted to go to the beach with a crew of zillion punks – check, check! The drives were long but so worth it for this little mini-tour-cum-vacay rip with my buds.

URBAN SPRAWL (SF) w/ TOTAL NADA, DEADBOLT, UNFILED (Montreal, The Squat)– September 5

Awesome, scrappy hardcore punk show at a semi-ephemeral, dry, DIY venue (not an actual squat, it's a gym). Many people who would've loved this show slept on it, which is too bad, but the few attendees really brought energy (DEADBOLT's string section moshed enough to cover everyone who was too lazy to bike to St. Henri). The night was capped by a crazy moonrise over Fattal followed by a flash thunderstorm that necessitated urgently running all the zines and merch inside during URBAN SPRAWL's set.

Varning XVII (Montreal, Piranha Bar) – Sep 11–13

I already wrote a whole Varning roundup (issue #8) so check that out if you wanna hear more about it. Blabbed with friends, watched too many good bands, ate vegan poutine in a park with an international crew of spiky punks and went a little insane trying to keep up with everyone on drugs.

Search for the Sun (Montreal, La Toscadura) – Oct 30–Nov 1

I can confidently say that the Friday show of this 3-day fest was one of the best gigs I've ever been to: THE MOB (UK), FLOWER (NYC), SCUMPUTER (UK), STREET GLOVES, FUCKIN' LOVERS (Philly) and UZU. I don't love Halloween so I was happy to have something else to do, but it meant the whole city was in a party mood – everything and everyone were just buzzing. SCUMPUTER (Gabbia from Chaos UK's electronic project) got everyone jumping around and dancing, including someone beside me in a full-head zebra mask – total surreal insanity. While I can't condone SCUMPUTER's silly AI-generated animations, I really love seeing older punks doing what they're really passionate about rather than just trotting out the same old-ass songs. That said, as far as old punks trotting out their old-ass songs... THE MOB's set was undeniably very fucking incredible. Finally seeing STREET GLOVES rip alongside another drum machine punk project rather than just being a total oddity on the bill was great, and I was stoked to finally catch FUCKIN' LOVERS again – their set at a Varning Matinée a few years ago blew my mind and is imprinted in my memory as one of the loudest shows I've ever been to. Seeing and hanging with the buds in FLOWER is always a treat, and I was watching alongside a few friends who had never seen them before which was pretty special. This whole weekend was kind of unreal, with way too many highlights to name.

Never Going Away (Toronto, Parish Hall) – November 15

A DIY-to-the-core show in a church basement organized by some younger folks in Toronto who are extremely on the level. Per their request we rolled up with our zine distro, which was a hit, and several people even traded us their own zines. The lineup was solid and none of the bands were all white dudes — I especially enjoyed Columbus' REGALIA and locals HUMAN FORM, and our buds DEADBOLT played probably their best set ever. While I spent my first few years in Canada perfunctorily hating on Toronto, I actually always have a nice time visiting and have been to and played some really sick shows. There are some really cool and solid people keeping things DIY!

All Locals All Ages gig (Montreal, Lopez) – Nov 29

Another all ages/dry show at a semi-ephemeral-space (a cleared-out skate/fashion shop run by a member of FAZE) that was 100% friendship, rippin' bands, wholesome fun. The kind of show where your cheeks hurt from grinning too much. It was PROGRESS?'s first show and they rocked so hard that a lightbulb spontaneously exploded. This was the platonic ideal of the kind of shows I want to attend and play.

Final thoughts:

As a known shit-talker of both reunion bands and “too many fests”, my list admittedly does include both. I appreciate being able to see bands who are at the top of their game, and to meet and hang with punks and bands who travel for bigger events. Circulation is good for the health of the subculture and seeing really awesome bands keeps me wanting to practice, write, start more bands, and keep doing what I'm doing (but better). But I wish just a bit more of the energy and cash that went into organizing blowout weekends or flying in big-name bands went into the more quotidian local gigs, on going all-out for bands who are struggling to break even on touring right now, or organizing for the kinds of infrastructure that would make our scene stronger (like a reliable all ages venue). That's what I want to see more of in 2026!



DEADBOLT at Lopez. Photo by Hamza Yahyaoui

Mathias: I am a bit younger than Christina, and while I do remember growing up in a time without omnipresent internet life or activity, I don't remember organising gigs or festivals before Meta's platforms. When I first got involved in doing gigs, Facebook was big in Denmark, and when I got involved in K-Town many years later it was huge.

Back when I joined K-Town, it felt like a natural extension of our website to have a Facebook account and event page, and I am pretty sure that that would also show in the data. We had far more traffic on the Facebook posts and in the comments section on the event page than on our website, and that must have rewired our brains into thinking that 'this is where we should focus our energy'. Incidentally that meant a lot more work, answering questions and DM's and figuring out the best times to post stuff, managing debates, banning scam ticket sellers, etc. After a few years we tried to avoid interacting with DMs and comments and instead divert traffic back to our website and our FAQ section, but that didn't really go as well as it could have.

Despite this, in a spur-of-the-moment decision, we made an Instagram account and that started to take off. In the last four years or so we have gotten quite insane reach and interactions on our posts etc — something I find both fascinating but also really weird, honestly.

Long story short, we fell into a trap and were seduced by the magical numbers (data) and marketing lingo telling us that we should be where our audience is. Our journey was like this: Word of mouth > Internet/website > Facebook > Instagram > hopefully some new place that is less corporate and awful. Now we are 'lucky' to be in a position where a lot of people know what we are (about) and will willingly seek out information about the fest, no matter if it's on our own website or a new platform like PixelFed.

Beyond what's in the statement, what was the motivation behind K-Town Hardcore Fest taking this position at this time? ("It was a long time coming...") Was it a matter of alternatives getting better/more awareness on your part of alternatives? Or Meta's platforms and dominance becoming intolerable? Was there a recent singular event or series of experiences (either positive or negative) that really drove the decision?

Mathias: We started talking about leaving Meta sometime in the early planning stages of K-Town Hardcore Fest 2025. We usually start planning the next edition of the fest by the end of a year, so that talk would have happened around November/December 2024 (maybe January 2025). The initial plan was to announce us leaving Meta, while at the same time using the same platforms to announce everything related to K-Town 2025. So one day we would announce some bands, and in the next post we would encourage everyone to leave with us to PixelFed, but things got in the way of our planning... I think there were several catalysts of why we wanted to leave, but the overall enshittification of the internet was one of the bigger trigger points.

Christina: I think we've all been sick of what social media has done to our community, for a long time. Sure, it's been great for mobilizing and spreading awareness, but it's also been a superb tool for division, miscommunication and slander. Being positioned on the political radical left, it's almost unbearable to see the commercialization and capitalization of punk that the SoMe era has boosted. We're far from the days of BYOFL (Book Your Own Fucking Life) where personal contact and networking were key elements of the international punk community. Now you are almost forced to use influencer tools, pay for boosts and use strategic communication to even be seen by

K-Town Hardcore has been around since 2001, and platforms like Facebook and Instagram have only existed since 2004 and 2010, respectively. With such a deep history, I'm wondering if the collective's organizational memory remembers what organizing the fest was like before Meta's platforms came to dominance in punk, and if you have any thoughts or insight on how we got to where we are now?

Christina: When we started the fest back in 2001, we hardly had any digital platforms to rely on. The group back then was composed of extremely active people who played in bands, ran labels, booked gigs and tours and travelled a lot for both music and politics. The festival was a natural continuation of all that. We started promotion early, with "pre-posters" to spread the word about dates, and another round of posters and flyers as soon as the lineup and program was set. Flyposting was mandatory and we would bring posters and flyers with us everywhere. All touring bands coming through Ungdomshuset got a stack and were asked to put them up along their tour route. We also sent packages with posters and flyers by mail to all the main squats and venues around Europe that we worked with. We relied on people wanting to help us out and I think it contributed to the sense of being part of something, when you were helping your "sister festival" advertising beforehand. I still see those posters on the walls of squats and venues across Europe, even though less people bring them around these days. I miss the connections we made back then. The sense of community and networking that was so much more concrete, and longer lasting than it is today — maybe because it came along with commitment and human interaction?

I think that convenience plays a big part in why we are where we are today. We started using social media to gain access to a different arena, but I think a lot of people forgot how valuable the arena they left behind really was. I remember how everyone was raving about how cool it was with Facebook, and how you could invite everyone interested "personally" to a gig. I think a part of the reason why we haven't spent all these years developing our own platforms, is that the most sceptical people tend to lean toward a less digital community and instead of embracing the digital opportunities, they're shunned or ignored instead of captured and reshaped to fit our political goals and values. I think I belong in that category myself, to be honest.

K-Town has never been a standalone event. We've always been a big part of our community, active with booking gigs and the scene around Ungdomshuset. We've always had many talks about how to build communities and how to offer a way into activism, politics and music for newcomers. We've maintained a rule about analog advertisement to this day, because we recognize that only nourishing your echo chamber doesn't build bigger and stronger scenes. We need to also catch the person finding something they didn't know they were looking for until they found it — like so many of us did when we first started coming to gigs. You are obligated to make printed posters and flyers for your gigs when booking at Ungdomshuset. And a big part of that, is that we want to be visible to the people who are not like us, and to the potential new friends out there. We want to be a visible thorn in the eye of established society and a continuous reminder that we are here and not going anywhere. Visibility is a powerful political tool.

I think we realize the reach social media has given us, and that reach is most definitely something we will have a hard time getting by without. But then again ...



K-TOWN HARDCORE FEST

interviewed by Martin Force

I never traveled for punk fests like an early-2000s-style anti-globalization summit-hopper, but I have definitely been to my fair share. K-Town Hardcore Fest has always stood out for me. I've been twice: once in 2018 while driving GAZM and CELL on tour, and last year playing bass with TOTAL NADA. It's big, but not too big, with all the official shows happening at

a single venue (the infamous Ungdomshuset), with an additional matinee or two happening off-site (including of course the BIKE WARS!). It's all extremely well organized, draws the most international crowd and lineup I've experienced, and (most importantly for me) has very clear DIY political consciousness.

So, in November last year I was extremely encouraged to see K-Town Hardcore Fest show up in my Mastodon feed with a shiny new PixelFed account, announcing their intention to leave Meta platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Here at Counterforce HQ we were already in the stages of planning Fediverse Punk Month for January 2026. Getting off corporate social media really is in the air! So I reached out to the organizing collective, hoping I could get an interview done in time for January (and before they are completely overwhelmed with planning K-Town Hardcore Fest 2026!).

Thank you to Christina and Mathias for quickly getting these answers back to us!

First, I would like to give readers some context in case they are not familiar with K-Town Hardcore Fest. Can you give a brief history of the fest? How did it start, and how is it organized today? What makes it special among punk fests?

Christina: As I am the only member still in the group from back then, I'll try to recap this one. The festival started out somehow by chance, in 2001. It was the same year as the EU summit in Gothenburg in Sweden. Back then, the EU summits were always a big draw internationally. We knew a lot of people would be travelling through Copenhagen to get there, so we decided to make two gigs we had already booked, into a mini festival "after the Gothenburg apocalypse" (or something like that!) and invite people travelling back from the protests to stay in Copenhagen for a few days. All the proceeds would be donated to the Anarchist Black Cross in the efforts needed to support expected prisoners after the riots which were more or less guaranteed to happen back then.

Christina: When social media first started really getting used in the scene, Facebook was the main go-to. MySpace was also a thing, but it wasn't until "events" could be made through Facebook that it really took off. These days I'd say that Instagram is the dominant platform. Facebook is slowly dying out, but still used by some. For a long time, gigs have been promoted on both those platforms in different ways, trying to maximise traction I guess.

LET'S KEEP PUNK INDEPENDENT!



OUR PUNK IS POLITICAL

K-TOWN HARDCORE FEST is a political fest. We're non-profit, anti-commercial, volunteer-run and independent! We want to be a radical alternative to mainstream culture, and serve as inspiration that 'another world' is possible.

Let's make sure our scene continues to exist outside the tech spheres, that have more or less usurped the mandate to mediate much of our social lives and interactions on their platforms. The enshittification is real, so let's not rely so heavily on them, but instead build and support alternatives, in a world where there are so few left.

Our intention is not to point fingers at anyone still using these platforms/apps, as we recognize and respect that there can be valid reasons to stay on - we just can't see ourselves taking part in it anymore. And we hope that our exit can be an inspiration to others to think about making the move as well. There are so many ways we can be better.

2/4

SAVE THE DATE!

K-TOWN HARDCOREFEST 2026

19TH-21ST OF JUNE 2026

GOODBYE TO META - HELLO TO:



UNGDOMSHUSET.DK

DUKOP.DK

Our local cooperatively run activist event calendar ♥

PIXELFED.SOCIAL @ktownhardcorefest

Non-corporate fediverse alternative to Instagram.

SUBVERT.FM

A co-operatively run music streaming service.

And of course or own website:

KTOWNHARDCOREFEST.ORG

which we will be using a lot more in the future.

4/4

Mathias: Yeah it's definitely Instagram. Facebook is being 'kept alive' by its event page functionality, but even that is dying out. It used to be like you could sort of trust the amount of attendees or guests listed on Facebook, but you can't even do that any more...